

Title: The Sale of Plum Island

The Plum Island Animal Disease Center (PIADC) is located on an 850-acre island off the north fork of Long Island in the Long Island Sound. It is currently operated by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The Consolidated Security, Disaster Assistance, and Continuing Appropriations Act of 2009 mandates the sale of the Island as a result of the determination by DHS to construct and operate a new facility in Manhattan, Kansas and move its operations from Plum Island. The DEIS and FEIS were prepared jointly by the General Service Administration (GSA) and DHS. The EPA and the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) served as cooperating agencies.

Current Status: The National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility in Manhattan, Kansas is expected to be completed in 2021. It will take approximately one year to transfer the pathogens from Plum Island and prepare the facility for use. The transition from Plum Island to Manhattan, Kansas will occur in 2022. At this time, GSA is continuing to fulfill their responsibilities to prepare Plum Island for competitive sale. This includes complying with CERCLA and historic preservation requirements, as well as completing a variety of other regulatory procedures. Two bills passed the house, one in 2016 and one in 2017 that would have impacted or canceled the sale of the island, but both efforts failed to progress in the Senate. During the spring of 2018, GSA will begin conducting focus groups to educate the public and potential buyers about the island. This will also help GSA develop a marketing plan for the island. It is likely that the island will be sold via an online auction.

Background: Plum Island is home to a variety of species protected under the Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act, including Roseate Tern, Piping Plovers, a variety of seals, as well as migrating sea turtles. EPA and FWS raised concerns during the scoping process about the importance of including an alternative that would permanently protect the entire undeveloped portion of the property, while allowing the developed portion of the island to be sold. The EIS did subsequently include a conservation option and an adaptive reuse option as two of the four reuse options.

EPA commented that the EIS should have included a more detailed explanation of the clean-up process as it relates to the research facility and potential biological contamination, including a discussion of the components of the clean-up. We also recommended that the EIS include a discussion of the long-term potential health implications for future residents in the event of a development scenario as it relates to access to the CERCLA landfill (i.e., WMA 26) site for recreation or as it relates to living in close proximity to the site.

In January 2016, Senate Report 114-68, accompanying the *Consolidate Appropriations Act, 2016* (P.L. 114-113), directed the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), in conjunction with the General Services Administration (GSA), the Department of the Interior (DOI), and the EPA, to prepare a report to address the final disposition of Plum Island. EPA reviewed and commented on the report, which evaluated a variety of disposition options, including conservation, adaptive reuse, and residential development.

GSA has maintained throughout the process that it does not have specific authority over the future use of the property. Without an act from congress that either cancels the sale, or modifies the terms of the sale, GSA is obligated to sell the island to the highest bidder.